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Sanskrit Literature: A Source of Inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi

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Mahatma Gandhi is one of the rare personalities in India who is held in high esteem not only in India but also in the entire world. He has drawn admiration from all classes the society. In the annals of India, Gandhi is a name to reckon with. After reading the account of the splendid sacrifice and heroism displayed by Mahatma Gandhi, who is hailed as Father of Nation, one gets raptured in true sense. It could be said without an exaggeration that no man of modern times had hold on the masses that he had. The devotion that he commanded from thousands of his countrymen during his lifetime was extra-ordinary. He is unquestionably the ideal of the people. He is a story of tremendous will and courage. His thoughts on various issues are of great relevance even today and will remain forever. This is why history gives him due honour. Fearless and honest by nature Mahatma Gandhi was a versatile, forward looking,

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towering personality having all-encompassing vision and massive organisation skill. Farsighted Gandhiji, who can be termed as real statesman had the qualities of leadership and determination within him. His universal vision, rational approach and commitment to ameliorating the distressed humanity are still unparalleled. He was a man of dynamic energy and inspiring personality. He is brightest beacon among the leaders of modern India. He was a human being with divine spark.

Gandhiji belongs to the race of the prophets who have the courage of the heart, the courtesy of the spirit and the laughter of the unafraid. Through his life and teaching, he bears testimony to the values for which this country has stood for ages, faith in spirit, respect for its mysteries, the beauty of holiness, the acceptance of life's obligations, the validity of character, values which are neither national nor international, but universal. He was not merely a great man; rather, he was both a great and a good man-a combination which is rarely achieved.

Institution in himself he came out with on several issues that were related to the Indian Society in particular and humanity in general. However, after going through rich Sanskrit Literature, it seems that he drew his inspiration from various Sanskrit texts.

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either: yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so

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strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all without believing them to have sprung from some common source which perhaps no longer exists.

To begin with the present article would firstly point out Mahatma Gandhi's view on various issues and thereafter come up with numbers of some Sanskrit quotes that might have impressed Mahatma Gandhi. Here, it goes without saying that Gandhiji had great respect for Sanskrit. For him Sanskrit is the bedrock of Indian speech and literature and the artistic and cultural heritage of India. His views on various matters affecting human being have been directly or indirectly motivated by thoughts spread over in Sanskrit Literature.

TRUTH

For Mahatma Gandhi, Truth played a vital role in leading a respectful life. What the truth is? In effect, Truth consists in speaking agreeable words, honestly and faithfully of what has been heard, seen or experienced, for welfare of others, and by giving up selfishness and pride. It is the correct expression of whatever is seen, heard or understood. Truth is keeping the good of others as the motive in view. Here are some views propagated by Mahatma Gandhi regarding truth.

"Truth is like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit the more you nurture it. The deeper the search in the mine of truth the richer the discovery of the gems buried there, in the shape of opening for an ever greater variety of service.[1]"

[1] An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, p159

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"All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights".[2]

"My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than truth".[3]

"Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth".[4]

"Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time. I must, therefore, continue to bear testimony to Truth even if I am forsaken by all. Mine many today be a voice in the wilderness, but it will be heard when all other voices are silenced, if it is the voice of Truth."[5]

"I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life."[6]

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[2] From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances, 1945, pp 2-3

[3] Young India, 7-2-1929,p42

[4] Harijan, 24-11-1933, p 6

[5] Ibid, 25-8-1946, p284

[6] Ibid, 14-3-1936, p 36

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Now here are some quotes that would have inspired Mahatma Gandhi to adopt Truth as a weapon in achieving everything in life. A voluminous book may be compiled if all the observations of the scriptures and sayings of saints on the subject of truth are collected together. According to *Cāṇakyanītisūtra*, there is no better austerity than truth-

नास्ति सत्यात्परं तपः।[7]

That which is eternal, imperishable, changeless, pure knowledge itself, consciousness, and devoid of the six deformities is truth. To attain that state means practice of truth, in the true sense of the term. But so long as that state is not reached, the effort to know truth, with a sincere heart, will be known as pursuit of truth. That is why *Bhiṣma* pointed out thirteen aspects of truth. Questioned by *Yudhiṣṭhira*, the old warrior *Bhiṣma*, said-

अविकारितमं सत्यं सर्ववर्णेषु भारत।
सत्यं सत्सु सदा धर्मः सत्यं धर्मः सनातनः॥
सत्यमेव नमस्येत सत्यं हि परमा गतिः।
सत्यं धर्मस्तपो योगः सत्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम्॥
सत्यं यज्ञः परः प्रोक्तः सर्वं सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम्॥

i.e. truth is ever unchangeable among all *varṇas*. It is constantly present in good and virtuous souls. It is the eternal *Dharma*. It as God is the supreme refuge of all,

[7] *Cāṇakyanītisūtra*, 417

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therefore, obeisance to truth. *Dharma*, penance, *yoga*, sacrifices and eternal *Brahma* all are but truth. They are all established in truth.

Padma Purāṇa is of the view that there is nothing of higher religious merit than truth-

अश्वमेधसहस्रं च सत्यं च तुलया धृतम्।
अश्वमेधसहस्राद्धि सत्यमेव विशिष्यते॥
नहि सत्यात् परो धर्मो न सत्याद्विद्यते परम।
नहि तीव्रतरं किञ्चिदनृतादिह विद्यते॥[8]

i.e. On the pan of the scale truth is heavier than hundred of horse-sacrifices. There is nothing of higher religious merit than truth. Nothing excels truth. Here in this world there is nothing more excruciating than falsehood.

According to *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Truth is no less than Supreme power of the universe. It is *Brahma* itself. *Dharma* is consecrated in Truth itself. Truth is nothing other than perennial *Veda*. One can attain *Brahma* by practising Truth is his or her life-

सत्यमेकपदं ब्रह्म सत्ये धर्मः प्रतिष्ठितः।
सत्यमेवाक्षया वेदा सत्येनावाप्यते परम्॥[9]

According to *Mahābhārata* there is no *Dharma* which can stand along with Truth. It is above all other good qualities. Not only is this, uttering lie the greatest sin which one could imagine-

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[8] *Padma Purāṇa*, 5.18.403

[9] *Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa*, 2/14/7

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नास्ति सत्यसमो धर्मो न सत्याद् विद्यते परम्।

न हि तीव्रतरं किञ्चिदनृतादिह विद्यते॥[10]

This fact has also been established by *Cāṇakyanītisūtra*. It says- नानृतात्पातकं परम्। i.e. There is no worse sin than untruth.[11] Talking about the importance of truth, *Ṛgveda* says-'सत्यं तातान सूर्यः'[12] i.e. The Sun has revealed truth. This *Veda* further says-'सत्येनोत्तभिता भूमिः'[13] i.e. The Earth is held up by truth. *Śatapatha Brāhamaṇa* says that glorious is he who speaks truth-'यशो ह भवति य एवं विद्वान् सत्यं वदति'।[14] It further adds that truth is nothing other than galaxy of Gods- 'सत्यमेव देवाः'।[15]

Mahābhārata is of the view that it is only and only truth which results in the ultimate good to living beings- 'यद् भूतहितमत्यन्तं तत्सत्यमिति धारणा'[16]। If anybody wants real success in life, the shelter is truth. This is not only true for common people but it applies equally for the kings. If they want to lead a success life nothing except truth is of avail. Adhering to truth a king remains happy here and hereafter- 'सत्ये हि राजा निरतः प्रेत्य चेह हि निन्दति'[17]॥ All the scriptures have sung the glory of truth in one united tune. The *Śruti*

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[10] *Mahābhārata, Ādiparva*/74/105

[11] *Cāṇakyanītisūtrāṇi*, 421

[12] *Ṛgveda*, 1.105.12

[13] Ibid, 10.85.1

[14] *Śatapatha Brāhamaṇa*, 1.1.1.5

[15] Ibid, 1.1.1.4

[16] *Mahābhārata, Āraṇyakaparva*/200/4

[17] Ibid, *Śāntiparav*a/56/17

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text says-'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म' i.e.Truth is the same as *Brahma*. The *Taittiriya Śruti* says- 'सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम्' i.e. Do not deviate from truth. The *Mahābhārata* says-

नास्ति सत्यात्परो धर्म नानृतात्पातकं परम्।
स्थितिर्हि सत्यं धर्मस्य तस्मात्सत्यं न लोपयेत्॥
उपैति सत्याद्दानं हि तथा यज्ञाः सदक्षिणाः।
त्रेताग्निहोत्रं वेदाश्च ये चान्ये धर्मनिश्चयाः॥[18]

i.e. There is no *Dharma* equal to truth, and no sin equal to untruth. The support of *Dharma* is truth; therefore truth should never be violated. Through observance of truth, one may reap the fruits of virtuous deeds like charity, performances of sacrifices with payment of regular fees, consecration and maintenance of the sacred fire, study of *Vedas* etc. If the fruits of performance of a thousand horse sacrifices are placed on one scale and Truth on another, the latter would weigh heavier than the former.

Truth is, as a matter of fact, God himself. The scriptures say-

आब्रह्मतृणपर्यन्तं मयया कल्पितं जगत्।
सत्यमेकं परब्रह्म विदित्वैवं सुखी भवेत्॥[19]

i.e. From *Brahma* down to the tiniest blade of grass all are the imaginary creations of *Māyā*. Supreme *Brahma* alone is real true; knowing him the *Jīva* attains happiness.

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[18] Ibid, 162

[19] Ibid, 161

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Uttering lies is considered to be sin. Unholy is the man who tells lies. Lies makes his inner self foul smelling-न हि सत्यादृते किञ्चिद् राज्ञां सिद्धिकारणम्। *Yogaśāstra* says-

असत्यवचनाद् वैरविषादाप्रत्ययदयः।

प्रादुःषन्ति न के दोषाः कुपथ्याद् व्याधयो यथा॥[20]

i.e. which evils, such as enmity, sorrow, lack of faith, etc. do not arise from telling lies like diseases from having unwholesome food?

A wise man should never tell a lie even by mistake. This uproots good fortune like the storm the big trees-

असत्यवचनं प्राज्ञः प्रमादेनापि नो वदेत्।

श्रेयांसि येन भज्यन्ते वात्ययेव महाद्रुमाः॥[21]

NON-VIOLENCE-

Sanskrit equivalent for non-violence is *Ahiṃsā*. It means 'non-killing'. It must have come into existence as a reaction to 'killing', and as a response to a feeling of aversion, distaste, repugnance to the act of 'killing' fellow human beings. In true sense *Ahiṃsā* means non-injury not only to human beings but to all living creatures. Infliction of pain or injury, on any being through body, mind, speech of feeling etc., is violence. Non-injury is known as non-violence.

In Indian tradition, *Ahiṃsā* has occupied a prominent place. By this, the scriptures inform that one should not cause harm to others not only physically but also

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[20] *Yogaśāstra*, 2/48

[21] Ibid, 2/57

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mentally. The status given to *Ahiṃsā* in *Hindu* scriptures seems to be very high. Among various types of tapas, *Ahiṃsā* secures a prominent position. One attains the blissful state by practising non-violence.

Now-the-days violence overt or covert, open or secret, on all levels, individuals, social group, national, and international is obviously playing havoc and embittering all human relations. Self in a narrow and parochial sense, self-interest in terms of possessions and or power is dominant as against all other interests. Exploitative injustice and constructive violence as that of haves and have-nots is the rule rather than exception. Here in modern age Gandhiji might be considered as the high priest of *Ahiṃsā* culture. It goes without saying that Gandhiji gave *Ahiṃsā* culture its shape and form by not merely preaching but by scrupulously practicing throughout his eventful life and finally sealing its authenticity by his own martyrdom. He often said that the principles he stood for and the culture he embodied were both as old as the hills. Here are some quotes of Mahatma Gandhi-

"The most distinctive and the largest contribution of Hinduism to India's culture is the doctrine of *Ahimsā*. It has given a definite bias to the history of the country for the last three thousand years and over and it has not ceased to be a living force in the lives of India's millions even today. It is a growing doctrine; its message is still being delivered. Its teaching has so far permeated our people that an armed revolution has almost become an impossibility in India not because, as some would have it, we as a race are physically weak, for it does not require much physical strength so much as a

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devilish will to press a trigger to shoot a person, but because the tradition of ahimsa has struck deep root among the people.[22]"

"Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul force or the power of Godhead within us."[23]

"My non-violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice. I can no more preach non-violence to a coward than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. Non-violence is the summit of bravery. And in my own experience, I have had no difficulty in demonstrating to men trained in the school of violence the superiority of non-violence. As a coward, which I was for years, I harboured violence. I began to prize non-violence only when I began to shed cowardice".[24]

"The path of true non-violence requires much more courage than violence."[25]

"Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands

[22] Harijan, 24-3-1929, p 95

[23] Ibid, 12-11-1938

[24] Young India, 28-5-1924, p 178

[25] Ibid, 4-8-1946, pp 248-249

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of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity."[26]

"Ahimsa is one of the world's great principles which no power on the earth can wipe out. Thousands like myself may die in trying to vindicate the ideal, but ahimsa will never die. And the gospel of ahimsa can be spread only through believers dying for the cause."[27]

"*Ahimsā* is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never for the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing, and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and non-violent is sheer self-deception."[28]

"No power on earth can subjugate you when you are armed with the sword of Ahimsa. It ennobles both the victor and the vanquished."[29]

The *Sanskrit* Literature is replete with the quotes on *Ahiṃsā* i.e. non-violence from Mahatma Gandhi might have drawn inspiration. Some of them are mentioned here- "अहिंसा परमो धर्मः"।[30] i.e. Non-violence towards all beings is the highest duty for anybody. One, who cultivates non-violence, ever remains immortal- 'अमृतं स नित्यं वसति

[26] Harijan, 20-7-1935, pp 180-181

[27] Ibid, 17-5-1946, p 140

[28] Ibid, 9-6-1946, p 172

[29] Ibid, 9-6-1946, p 174.

[30] *Mahābhārata*, आदिपर्व/11/12

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योऽहिंसां प्रतिपद्यते'।[31] The non-violent is as good as the mother and father of all beings- 'अहिंस्रः सर्वभूतानां यथा माता यथा पिता'।[32] Those sensible wise who follow the path purified by non-violence, they only go up to the higher regions. Others either join the animal kingdom or repair to the nether region-

अहिंसानिर्मलं धर्मं सेवन्ते ये विपश्चितः।

तेषामेवोर्ध्वगमनं यान्ति तिर्यगधोऽन्यथा॥[33]

Like mother non-violence does good to beings, it is the nectarine river in the desert of the world, it is the mast of rainy clouds in the forest fire of sorrows, it is the best remedy for those afflicted with disease of whirlings of births-

मातेव सर्वभूतानामहिंसा हितकारिणी।

अहिंसैव हि संसारमरावमृतसारिणी॥

अहिंसा दुःखदावाग्निप्रावृष्येषण्यघनावली।

भवभ्रमिरुगार्तानामहिंसा परमौषधी॥[34]

FEARLESSNESS-

Nervous excitement caused by the thought of losing something which is agreeable, and meeting with something, which is undesirable is called fear. Total absence of this sort of fear is fearlessness. It connotes freedom from all external fear-fear

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[31] Ibid, Śāntiparva/237/19

[32] Ibid, Anuśāsanaparva/117/40

[33] *Padmapurāṇa*, 4/41

[34] *Yogaśāstra*, 2/51-52

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of disease, bodily injury or death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on. All fear is the baseless fabric of our own vision. Fear has no place in our hearts when we have shaken off the attachment for wealth, for family and for body. '*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah'* (Enjoy the things of the earth by renouncing them) is the noble commandment. Fearlessness does not mean arrogance or aggressiveness. That in itself is a sign of fear. Fearlessness leads to the calmness and peace of mind.

Mahatma Gandhi felt that it was indispensible for the growth of the other noble qualities. Here are some of his quotes-

"How can one seek truth, or cherish love, without fearlessness? The path of *Hari* (the Lord) is the path of brave, not of cowards".[35]

"Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral.[36]"

"Perfect fearlessness can be attained only by him who has realized the Supreme, as it implies the height of freedom from delusions. But one can always progress towards this goal by determined and constant endeavour and by increasing confidence in oneself. Fear is the baseless fabric of our own vision. Fear has no place in our hearts when we have shaken off the attachment for wealth, for family and for body."[37]

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[35] From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances, 1945, p 27

[36] Young India, 13-10-1921, p 323

[37] Ibid, 11-9-1930, p2

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"Fear is a thing which I dislike. Why should one man be afraid of another man? Man should stand in fear of God alone, and then he can shed all other fears".[38] "There is so much superstition and hypocrisy around that one is afraid even to do the right thing. But if one gives way to fear, even truth will have to be suppressed. The golden rule is to act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right.[39]

Now here are some quotes from *Sanskrit* Literature which would have inspired Mahatma Gandhi. *Mahābhārata* says that from whom nobody gets afraid and he who himself is not fearful to others and from whom this whole world is like *Ātmā*, he gets rid from difficult to cross crisis-

येषां न कश्चित् त्रसति न त्रसन्ति हि कस्यचित्।
येषामात्मसमो लोको दुर्गाप्यतितरन्ति ते॥[40]

After ridding from his body one has no fears from any quarter if he entertains no fear from living beings and the living beings have no fear from him-

अभयं यस्य भूतेभ्यो भूतानामभयं यतः।
तस्य देहाद्विमुक्तस्य भयं नास्ति कुतश्चन॥[41]

The kind hearted man who manoevours fearlessness to all beings, receives in return fearlessness from them-

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[38] Harijan, 2-6-1946, p 477

[39] Ibid, 2-6-1946, p 388

[40] *Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva*/110/16

[41] Ibid, 154/26

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अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो यो ददाति दयापरः।

अभयं तस्य भूतानि ददतीत्यनुशुश्रुम॥[42]

Vedic *Ṛṣi* prays- May we be fearless of our friends, and even of those who are unfriendly to us, may we never fall in dread of whom we know and even of those whom we do not know, may we remain free from any apprehension by night and in the day time, and may all the quarters be friendly to us-

अभयं मित्रादभयमित्रादभयं ज्ञातादभयं परोक्षात्।

अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवा नः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु॥[43]

DIGNITY OF WOMEN-

Mahatma Gandhi described woman as man's better half. As long as she has not the same rights in law as man, as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of boy, so long we should know that India is suffering from partial paralysis. According to him women are gifted with equal mental capacities and therefore she has equal rights. He opined that wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence but should be treated as honored comrades in common service. Gandhiji felt that as education enables women to uphold their natural rights, proper education should be imparted on them. He was of the view that men and women are complementary to each other. Women must not suffer any legal disability which is not suffered by men. For Mahatma Gandhi, the two (man and woman) live the same life,

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[42] Ibid, Anuśāsanaparva/117/22

[43] *Atharvaveda*, 19/15/6

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have the same feeling. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help.

Here are some quotes of Mahatma Gandhi-

"Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man and she as an equal right of freedom and liberty with him". She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not as a result of learning to read and write".[44]

"I believe in the proper education of women".[45]

"The woman who knows and fulfils her duty realises her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which she presides".[46]

"Man should learn to give place to women and a country or community in which women are not honoured cannot be considered as civilized".[47]

"The wife is not the husband's bondslave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows-as free as husband to choose her own path."[48]

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[44] Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, p 425

[45] Harijan, 27-2-1937, p 19

[46] Ibid, 12-10-1934, pp 276-7

[47] Ibid, 11-1-1948, p 508

[48] An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, p 38

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Going through Gandhiji's view on womenfolk one could without any hesitation conclude that he drew his inspiration from *Sanskrit* texts, which are considered to be repository of all kinds of knowledge. The *Sanskrit* Literature by and large has fully recognised the importance of woman. The importance of woman in a family has been proclaimed in many verses of *Manu Smṛti*. It says-

पितृभिर्भ्रातृभिश्चैताः पतिभिर्देवरैस्तथा।
पूज्या भूषयितव्याश्च बहुकल्याणमीप्सुभिः॥[49]

i.e. Seeking many a blessings (i.e. God gifts) in life, her father, mother, husband or husband's younger brother shall maintain a bride with a respectful love, and give her ornaments.

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः॥[50]

i.e. The deities are pleased on the family where women are honoured i.e. held in respect. However, the house, where women are dishonoured and insulted, all the acts go fruitless i.e. no action yields good result.

शोचन्ति जामयो यत्र विनश्यत्याशु तत्कुलम्।
न शोचन्ति तु यत्रैता वर्धते तद्धि सर्वदा॥[51]

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[49] *Manusmṛti*-3.55

[50] Ibid, 3.56

[51] Ibid, 3.57

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i.e. The house prospers in which womenfolk do not grieve. The family, in which they live in grief, perishes i.e. suffers speedy destruction.

जामयोयानि गेहानि शपन्त्यप्रतिपूजिताः।

तानि कृत्याहतानीव विनश्यन्ति समन्ततः॥[52]

i.e.The homes accursed by disrespected women, go to dogs as if struck *kṛtyā* i.e. black magic.

तस्मादेताः सदा पूज्या भूषणाच्छादनाशनैः।

भूतिकामैर्नरैर्नित्यं सत्कारेषूत्सवेषु च॥[53]

i.e Thus everybody desirous of prosperity must adore his womenfolk providing them with nourishing food, good clothings and ornaments particularly on occasions of festivity or religious celebrations.

सन्तुष्टो भार्यया भर्ता भर्त्रा भार्या तथैव च।

यस्मिन्नेव कुले नित्यं कल्याणं तत्र वै ध्रुवम्॥[54]

i.e. In the families where husband and wife have harmony between the two; the benediction is sure there.

स्त्रियां तु रोचमानायां सर्वं तद्रोचते कुलम्।

तस्यां त्वरोचमानायां सर्वमेव न रोचते॥[55]

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[52] Ibid, 3.58

[53] Ibid, 3.59

[54] Ibid, 3.60

[55] Ibid, 3.62

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i.e. So long as the women are happy and enchanting, the entire family is happy. If they are unpleasing the entire family does look gloomy.

उपाध्यायान्दशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता।

सहस्रं तु पितृन्माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते॥[56]

i.e. An *Ācārya* is ten times greater than *Upādhyāya*; the father is hundred times greater than *Ācārya* but a mother is one thousand times greater in glory even than the father.

देवदत्तां पतिर्भार्यां विन्दते नेच्छयात्मनः।

तां साध्वीं बिभृयान्नित्यं देवानां प्रियमाचरन्॥[57]

i.e. A man gets wife not by his own will but she is given to him by gods. Therefore it is imperative on him that he should have her well maintained to please the Gods.

अन्योन्यस्याव्यभिचारो भवेदामरणान्तिकः।

एष धर्मः समासेन ज्ञेयः स्त्रीपुंसयोः परः॥

तथा नित्यं यतेयातां स्त्रीपुंसौ तु कृतक्रियौ।

यथा नाभिचरेतां तौ वियुक्तावितरेतरम्॥[58]

i.e. This is the general rule of conjugal life that the wife and husband not sidestepping each other follow their *Dharma* with full co-operation till the last moment

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[56] Ibid, 2.145

[57] Ibid, 9.95

[58] Ibid, 9.101-102

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of life. So a married couple should try to perform his household duties with co-operation and should never be separated from each other.

एतावानेव पुरुषो यज्जायाऽऽत्मा प्रजेति ह।
विप्राः प्राहुस्तथा चैतद्यो भर्ता सा स्मृताङ्गना॥
न निष्क्रयविसर्गाभ्यां भर्तुर्भार्या विमुच्यते।
एवं धर्मं विजानीमः प्राक्प्रजापतिनिर्मितम्॥[59]

i.e. A person consists of his own body, his progeny and wife. The learned say that the husband and wife both are one and the same. By selling or deserting the wife she is not deprived of her wifehood. To the best of my knowledge this is law established by *Prajāpati* in the past.

सूक्ष्मेभ्योऽपि प्रसङ्गेभ्यः स्त्रियो रक्ष्या विशेषतः।
द्वयोर्हि कुलयोः शोकमावहेयुररक्षिताः॥[60]

i.e. Even the slightest possibility of slips the women should be guarded against; because unguarded woman might cause grief to both the families and parents and parents-in-law.

इमं हि सर्ववर्णानां पश्यन्तो धर्ममुत्तमम्।
यतन्ते रक्षितुं भार्यां भर्तारो दुर्बला अपि॥
स्वां प्रसूतिं चरित्रं च कुलमात्मानमेव च।
स्वं च धर्मं प्रयत्नेन जायां रक्षन्हि रक्षति॥[61]

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[59] Ibid, 9.45-46

[60] Ibid, 9.5

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i.e. While observing this best possible *Dharma* for all the four *Varṇas*, even the weaker husbands try to safeguard their wives. A person safeguarding his wife with care also protects his children, character, the family, his own self and his *Dharma* automatically.

प्रजनार्थं महाभागाः पूजार्हा गृहदीप्तयः।

स्त्रियः श्रियश्च गेहेषु न विशेषोऽस्ति कश्चन॥[62]

i.e. The women are worth adoring as they produce children and beautify the homes. They are benevolent also. There is not much difference between good women and *Lakṣmī*.

This part, *Upaniṣads* have recommended rituals to a householder for ensuring the birth of scholarly daughter- अथ य इच्छेद्दुहिता मे पण्डिता जायेत, सर्वमायुरियादिति, तिलौदनं पाचयित्वा सपिष्मन्तमश्नीयाताम् ईश्वरौ जनयितवै।[63] i.e. he who wishes, 'May a daughter be born to me, who will be a scholar and attain full longevity', should have rice and Sesamum cooked together, and with his wife eat it mixed with ghee. Then they would be able to produce such a daughter.

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[61] Ibid, 9.6-7

[62] Ibid, 9.26

[63] *Bṛhadāraṇyakopniṣad*, 6/4/17

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Daughters were regarded as the pride of the family-कन्येयं कुलजीवितम्।[64] The father used to recite a prayer for the welfare of his daughter just with the same solicitude as he did for the happiness of his son.[65]

Skanda Purāṇa says that even a *saṃnyāsī*, whom all people pay obeisance should pay obeisance to mother with care-'सर्ववन्द्येन यतिना प्रसूर्वन्द्या प्रयत्नतः'[66] All women of the world have been regarded as the forms of Goddess Durgā-'विद्याः समस्तास्तव देवि भेदाः स्त्रियः समस्ताः सकला जगत्सु'।[67] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives high place to woman by saying that woman as mother is the best and foremost preceptor of children and she is not merely an object of pleasure but a colleague in the religious life of man. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* extols woman so much so to call them embodiments of all divine virtues on Earth. '*Soma* gave women purification, the *Gāndharva* sweet speech, *Agni* perfect purity, therefore, verily woman are always pure".

According to *Vedas*, one who considers a woman weak is himself a wicked fellow.[68] *Yajurveda* state that a woman is thousand times valiant, bold and vigorous.[69] *Ṛgveda* glorifies the role of women in the family by declaring that it is the wife who

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[64] *Kumārsambhavam*, 6/63

[65] *Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra,* 15/12/3

[66] *Skandapurāṇa, Kāśī*/11/50

[67] *Durgāsaptaśatī*, 9/6

[68] *Ṛgveda*-10/86/9

[69] *Yajurveda*-13/26

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symbolises the house.[70] Abduction or crime against women is considered highly disgraceful and blemished for the nation.[71]

Woman have played pivotal role in the formation and existence of the ancient Indian society. She occupied a very important place in the society during *Vedic* times. She was master of the house, eternal companion to her husband, respected as daughter, wife and mother.[72]

A married woman is regarded as an integral part of her husband. So she is naturally entitled to enjoy all the rights, which are enjoyed by her husband. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the wife has been considered as the soul of her husband. When *Rāma* was exiled, the family preceptor *Vaśiṣṭha*- the greatest scholar and seer of his time declared that in absence of *Rāma*, *Sita*, the soul of *Rāma* will look after the kingdom. *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* opines that capital sentence should be imposed for offence of rape committed against woman arrested by an officer of the state.

Atharvaveda mentions that the period before marriage was utilized for imparting education to them. It says that a maiden can succeed in her life only if she was trained properly during *Brahmacarya*.[73]

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[70] *Ṛgveda*, 3.53.4

[71] Ibid, 10.109.4

[72] *Atharvaveda*, 14.1.23

[73] Ibid, 11.5.18

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Wife is considered to be the keystone of the arch of the husband's bliss. The house is considered to quite empty to a person if his wife is not there to supervise over it-'भार्याहीनगृहस्थस्य शून्यमेव गृहं भवेत्'।[74] She is the surest solace to the husband.[75]

Strisaṅgrahaṇa (Adultery and rape) has now-a-day become a very serious problem in modern era. If thoughts preached in sacred Sanskrit texts are practiced, the problem could be resolved to very great extent. Adultery and rape were considered to be biggest offence in ancient India and stern punishments were prescribed for them. Here are some references-

न हीदृशमनायुष्यं लोके किञ्चन विद्यते।

यादृशं पुरुषस्येह परदारोपसेवितम्॥[76]

i.e. There is nothing in the world as damaging one's life as enjoying women other than one's own wife.

परदाराभिमर्शेषु प्रवृत्तान्नृन्महीपतिः।

उद्वेजनकरैर्दण्डैश्छिन्हयित्वा प्रवासयेत्॥[77]

i.e. If a person cohabits with others' wife the king should award torturing punishment and cut apart his limbs and exile him.

योऽकामां दूषयेत्कन्यां स सद्यो वधमर्हति।[78]

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[74] *Mahābhārata*, 12/4/4

[75] Ibid, 3.58.29

[76] *Manusmṛti*, 4/134

[77] Ibid, 8.352

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i.e. A person raping a virgin forcibly without her consent must be instantly killed.

स्त्रीषु वृत्तोपभोगस्यात् प्रसह्यपुरुषो यदा।

वधे तत्र प्रवर्तते कार्यातिक्रमणं हि तत्॥

Capital punishment should be awarded to a man who forcefully indulges in sexual intercourse with a woman.

Going by abovementioned findings it is wide and clear that father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi was highly fascinated with the thoughts preached in the *Sanskrit* texts as far as the matter related to the dignity of women are concerened. In effect, thoughts found in Sanskrit texts regarding women should be appreciated by one and all. If common people know about the facts they would certainly develop thought of respect towards women.

GOD-

God is wholly good. There is no evil in Him. God made man in His own image. Unfortunately for us, man has fashioned Him in his own image. This arrogation has landed mankind in a sea of troubles. God is the Supreme Alchemist. In His presence all iron and dross turn into pure gold. Similarly does all evil turn into good. Goodness is God. Goodness conceived as apart from Him is a lifeless thing and exist only whilst it is a paying policy. So are all morals. If they are to live in us, they must be considered and

[78] Ibid, 8.364

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cultivated in their relation to God. Here are some observations of Mahatma Gandhi regarding the Almighty God-

"We try to become good because we want to reach and realize God. All the dry ethics of the world turn to dust because apart from God they are lifeless. Coming from God, they come with life in them. They become part of us and ennoble us".[79]

"God cannot be realized through the intellect. Intellect can lead one to a certain extent and no further. It is a matter of faith and experience derived from faith. One might rely on the experience. Full faith does not feel the want of experience".[80]

"God is all powerful. He can change the hearts of man and bring real peace among them".[81]

"There is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember Him by the name which is most familiar to us".[82]

Here are some references regarding the God in Sanskrit Literature which might have worked as a guiding force for Mahatma Gandhi-

According to *Mahābhārata*, the world exists under the control of God. It is not all of one's own accord. He is the upholder of beings in course of pain and pleasure as also

[79] Harijan, 24-8-1947, p 285

[80] Ibid, 4-8-1946, p 183

[81] Ibid, 3-8-1947, p 262

[82] Ibid, 28-4-1946, p 111

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lovely and repelling aptitudes. While controlling he maintains all shining bright in front-

ईश्वरस्य वशे लोकस्तिष्ठते नात्मनो यथा॥

धातैव खलु भूतानां सुखदुःखे प्रियाप्रिये।

दधाति सर्वमीशानः पुरस्ताच्छुक्रमुच्चरन्॥[83]

The best thing for man is not to let God slip out of his mind even for a moment. The man who has undertaken a vow not to forget God even for an instant bids fair to realize Him in this very birth; there is no room for the least doubt about it. The Lord says in *Gītā*-

"अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः॥"[84]

According to *Mahābhārata*, Gods have attained supremacy, as they had been free from attachment and enmity. They protect the people as they are attributed with supreme potential of *Yoga*-

रागद्वेषविनिर्मुकता एश्वर्यं देवता गताः।

योगेश्र्यैण संयुक्ता धारयन्ति प्रजा इमाः॥[85]

Gods relish nectarean oblations. They appreciate truth and honesty- स्वाहास्वधामृतभुजो देवाः सत्यार्जवप्रियाः।[86]

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[83] *Mahābhārata, Āraṇyakaparva*/31/20-21

[84] *Gītā*, 8.14

[85] *Mahābhārata, Āraṇyakaparva*, 2.76

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Hence, *Vedic Ṛṣi* says- I bow to that God who is present in fire, water, all living beings, herbs and trees-

यो देवोऽग्नौ योऽप्सु यो विश्वं भुवनमाविवेश।

य ओषधीषु यो वनस्पतिषु तस्मै देवाय नमो नमः॥[87]

Describing God, *Gītā* has rightly observed-

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यमं त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम्।

त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे॥[88]

i.e. O God, you are imperishable, the supreme Being, the One thing to be known. You are the great refuge of this universe; You are the undying guardian of the eternal dharma, you are the ancient *Puruṣa*, I ween.

DHARMA-

According to the Indian Tradition, four are the *Puruṣarthas* i.e. the goals or ideals of the human life. These goals are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*. Of these we can say that *Dharma* is the root; *Artha*, the branch; *Kāma*, the flower; and *Mokṣa*, the fruit of the tree of the life. In this way it can be said that *Dharma* is the fundamental means to attain the other three goals. In effect, if the root is watered, the branches and the flowers will be healthy and yield delicious fruit. Therefore, if *Dharma* is practiced, it will help man in attaining worldly prosperity as well as final beatitude.

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[86] Ibid, *Anuśāsanaparva*/116.27

[87] *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 2/17

[88] *Gītā*, 11/18

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Among the great concepts and doctrines, the basic principles and directives of Hinduism, *Dharma* stands out pre-eminent, with a vast, deep and pervasive significance of its own. Having its rudimentary beginning in the *Vedas*, it has, over the centuries, grown like a mighty tree, with numerous branches and secondary roots.

Gandhiji advocated for the establishment of dharma in social and political system of the country. For him *Dharma* was not just a synonym of religion. It was life style which helped in leading fearless and dutiful life. Accepting the importance of dharma, Mahatma Gandhi said-

"I would be ready even to sacrifice the country for the sake of *Dharma*; such is the ideal which inspires me. My patriotism is subject to my concern for *Dharma*. If the interests of the country conflict with *Dharma*, I would sacrifice the former".[89]

The concept of *Dharma* is vast and vide. It is a *Sanskrit* expression of widest import. There is no corresponding word in any other language. The word *'Dharma'* is derived from the root, 'dhṛi' meaning to maintain, preserve, hold, bear and carry etc.[90] *Mahābhārata* says that the word '*Dharma*' is derived from '*Dhārṇā*. As per it, that which has capacity to sustain is indeed '*Dharma*'[91]

In this way we understand that the basic meaning of *'Dharma'* is the moral law, which sustains world, human society and the individual. It is a key facet of *Hindu*

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[89] Godly Men and their Golden works, p 181

[90] The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p 274

[91] *Mahābhārata, Karṇaparva*/69/58

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culture. It is associated with many aspects of human life. It goes without saying that it is only *Dharma*, which can hold, unify and maintain the entire go of the world. The force by which everything is held is called *'Dharma'*. It is regarded as mode of life or a code of conduct, which regulates the works and activities of the man as a member of society and as and individual. It acts as a sociological phenomenon as well as personal experience.

While *Dharma* touches wide varieties of topics, the essence of *Dharma* is also declared by various works. *Mahābhārata* says-Truthfulness, to be free from anger, sharing one's wealth with others, forgiveness, purity, absence of enmity, straightforwardness, maintaining persons dependent on oneself are the 'Dharma' of persons belonging to all *varṇa*.[92]

The principles established in the scriptures by the seers stand on the firm footing of *Dharma*, which has ten elements according to *Manu*. These ten elements are steadfastness, forbearance, self restraint, non-thieving, purity, control over the sense-organs, intellect, self knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger-

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम्॥[93]

The characteristics of *Dharma* given by *Manu Smṛti* are such that no nation and no sect of religion can raise any question and objection to them. The manhood of man

[92] Ibid, *Śāntiparva*, 60/7-8

[93] The *Manusmṛti*, 6/92

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can develop only through the proper observance of this *Dharma*. The view of *Manu* regarding *Dharma*, in this way, include the right to develop mental ability, right to justice and right to non-corrupt society.

According to *Shrimad Bhāgvata Mahāpurāṇa*, the highest virtue, ie *Dharma* of all men consists of following features-truthfulness, compassion, austerity, purity, endurance, discrimination (the power of distinguishing right from wrong), control of mind and the senses, non-violence, continence, charity, muttering prayers, straightforwardness, contentment, service of those who look upon all with the same eye, gradually withdrawing from all mundane activities, egotism, refraining from futile talk, inquiry into the self, equitable distribution among created beings as one's self, chanting of and dwelling on the names and glories of the Universe.[94]

In this way it can be said that the *Dharma* regulates human conduct and casts individuals into right type of moulds of character by inculcating in them in them social and moral virtues. It is the sense of *Dharma* is each individual member of the society that spurs him on to behave with dignity and becoming demeanour in relation to his fellow beings. Hence it is said-"*Dharma* is the rock on which all virtues are founded. It is the basis of all excellences and the validation of all noble ideas. In other words *Dharma* is an evolutionary, holistic concept and not a fragmentary idea. Just as white light shines in different colours according to the medium it is passing through, *Dharma*

[94] *Śrimad Bhāgvata Mahāpurāṇa* (Part II), 7/11/8-12

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takes on diverse hues according to the individual or society through which it manifests itself. While light is single, but its constituent colours are multiple and distinct.

Dharma is the life-force of the society, like *'Prāṇa'* in an individual. Any state or institution or even society or an individual cannot exist without *Dharma*. In the field of *Dharma*, theoretical knowledge is not enough. Real knower of *Dharma* is one who is friendly to all and who is engaged in doing well to all, in thought, word and deed.[95]

Nothing is superior to *Dharma* in this creation.[96] *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* also says- one who knows the truth about the principles of *Dharma*, material enjoyments and prosperity, possess a keen memory and perspicacious. He attains proficiency in discharging all types of duties.[97]

If these are facts, we are left with no other option but to make *'Dharma'* part and parcel of our life. Here one has to understand that '*Dharma'* being violated destroys; *'Dharma'* being preserved preserves. *Dharma* should not be violated, lest violated *Dharma* destroys us-

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत्॥[98]

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[95] *Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva*/262/9

[96] *Bṛhadāraṇyakopniṣad (Śāṃkara Bhāsya Sahita)*, 1/4/14

[97] *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, 2/1/22

[98] *The Manusmṛti*, 8/15

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Brahmapurāṇa has rightly pointed out that *'Dharma'* alone is helper and protector everywhere. The seers have paid utmost heed to the noble thoughts of all. There is no room for malevolence, falsehood, enmity, deception, treachery, lasciviousness, arrogance, greed, crookedness, usurpation of other's wealth, uncalled for anger and conspiracy. The Indian concept of *Dharma* does not allow anybody to do anything to anybody, which is not agreeable to oneself.[99]

In *Ṛgveda*, the word *'Dharma'* signifies the meaning of 'upholder' or 'supporter'. The word *'Dharma'* was given more elaboration, emphasis and extension during the *Upaniṣadic* period. Some *Upaniṣads* conjoined it with truth and regarded it as the highest principle of human life. There is nothing higher than *'Dharma'*. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* gives emphasis on the ethical meaning of *Dharma* pertaining to man's social duties. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* refers to studies, austerities and contemplation as being comprehended under the concept of *Dharma*. The importance and significance of *Dharma* is very well established in *Śrimad Bhagvad Gītā*. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says- 'Whenever there is decline of virtue (*Dharma*) and increase of vice (*Adharma*), then do I manifest Myself. For the protection of the pious, the destruction of evil-doers, and establishing virtues, I manifest Myself in every age'-

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यगम्॥

[99] *Bhāratiya Dharma Aur Darśana*, p 89

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परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥[100]

Here one thing is clear. *Dharma* alone is the friend of virtuous; *Dharma* is their refuge; all the movable and immovable objects in the three worlds of creation are guided by *Dharma*. *Śrimad Bhagvad Gītā* divides human propensities into two categories divine and devilish. One should try to follow divine qualities and do away with devilish qualities in order to establish *Dharma*. Fearlessness, purification of one's existence, cultivation of spiritual knowledge, charity, self-control, performance of sacrifice, study of the Vedas, austerity, simplicity, non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to faultfinding, gentleness, modesty, determination, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, freedom from envy and the passion for honour- these transcendental qualities belong to Godly men endowed with divine nature. Arrogance, pride, anger, conceit, harshness and ignorance-these qualities belong to those of demoniac qualities make for bondage-

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम्॥
अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम्।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम्॥
तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता।

[100] *Śrimad Bhagvada Gītā*, 4/7-8

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भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत॥

दम्भो दर्पोऽभिमनश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च।

अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम्॥[101]

Those who believe in discrimination, in effect, don't practice *Dharma*. They never attain real happiness. They are not respected in the society. *Dharma* on the social plane, aims at attaining all round welfare for the entire community. By means of injunctions and prohibitions, Dharma directs human activity so that each unit in society may fulfil its function and contribute to the general good of the society.

In AS Narayan Deepshitulu case, the Supreme Court of India has defined the word *'Dharma'*. As per it-"*Dharma* is that which is indicated by the *Vedas* as conducive to the highest good, which sustains and ensures progress and welfare of all in this world. *Dharma* embraces every type of righteous conduct covering every aspect of life essential for the sustenance and welfare of the individual and the society and includes those rules which guide and enable those who believe in God and heaven to attain *Mokṣa*"

Here it would be justified to quote *Mahābhārata*, where *Dharma* has been explained to be that which helps the upliftment of living beings. In this way, that which ensures welfare of living things is *Dharma*.[102] In fact, from *Dharma* arises wealth,

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[101] Ibid, 16/1-4

[102] *Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva*/109/10

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Dharma is the source of happiness, through *Dharma* we attain everything; *Dharma* is the essence of the world.[103]

At the physical level, *Dharma* is that which nourishes and supports the health of the body. Whether we want to serve others, obtain liberation, or even enjoy life in this world we need a healthy body. Proper sleep, healthy eating, exercise, and cleanliness all contribute to good health. Therefore**,** practicing these are all acts of *Dharma*.

At the mental level we all want to be peaceful and happy. Therefore to think in a loving way is *dharma* and to think negatively of someone is *adharma* because it will disturb our personality and can also cause harm to the other person.

Whether we are students, administrators, businessmen, labourers or even monks, all are governed by the duties established for their particular stages and professions. When everyone accepts the responsibilities of their *dharma* the entire society prospers.

All our present day problems are a direct result of disregarding *'Dharma'*, under the influence of a materialistic philosophy, in the belief that it alone can usher in happiness and secure the welfare of the people. Now it is becoming clear that human problems multiply as we go on multiplying our lust and desire for material wealth and pleasure and that the solution to all the problems, Social, Economic and Political, which the world and our nation are facing, in particular the crash of our moral edifice is, *Dharma* alone panacea. There is no alternative to *'Dharma'*. This is the eternal truth.

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[103] *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, 3/9/30

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"Dharma" has the power to prevent a man from committing an offence by acting as an antigen against the six enemies inherent in every man. It is preventive. It gives immunity against sinful thoughts.

Dharma regulates the mutual obligation of the individuals and the society. *Dharma* as a concept is very wide and comprehensive. It stands for establishing harmony, peace stability and progress in the society. Right from the very ancient times, *Dharma* has been accepted as an ideal of human life and has accordingly fascinated and inspired the people. We can say that *Dharma* constitutes the foundation of all affairs in the world. People respect one who adheres to *Dharma*. It insulates man against sinful thoughts and actions. It is the basis of all excellences and the validation of all noble ideas. It is evolutionary, holistic concept and not a fragmentary idea. When *Dharma* is practised, it confers on man and society health, wealth and happiness. Progress and prosperity follow in quick succession as a matter of course. Everything in this world is founded on *Dharma*. *Dharma*, therefore, is Supreme.

BRAHMACHARYA-

Total abstinence from eight forms of sexual indulgence is *Brahmacharya*. Control of the palate is very closely connected with the observance of *Brahmacharya*. It means not merely mechanical celibacy but it means complete control over all the organs and senses enabling one to attain perfect from all passion and hence from sin in thought, word and deed. Here are some quotes that would bring to light thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi regarding *Brahmacharya*-

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"Control of the palate is very closely connected with the observance of Brahmacharya. I have found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes comparatively easy, if one acquires mastery over the palate."[104]

"Life without *Brahmacharya* appears to me be insipid and animal like. The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint. What formerly appeared to me to be extravagant praise of *brahmacharya* is our religious books seems now, with increasing clearness every day, to be absolutely proper and founded on experience." [105]

Now here are some references from *Sanskrit* Literature which might have inspired Mahatma Gandhi to think about *Brahmacharya*-

आचार्यो ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्मचारी प्रजापतिः।

प्रजापतिर्वि राजति विराडिन्द्रोऽभवद् वशी॥[106]

i.e.The preceptor is *Brahmacārī* and *Brahmacārī* is lord of the house. Through this *Brahmacharya* the man in house holding life shines throughout and the shining soul, the master of organs become powerful to subdue all passions.

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं वि रक्षति।

आचार्यो ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिणमिच्छते॥[107]

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[104] From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances, 1945, p 15

[105] An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, p 234

[106] *Atharvaveda*, 11/5/16

[107] Ibid, 11/5/17

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i.e. The king through the practice and strict discipline of *Brahmacharya* or having restraints on sexual pursuit rules his realms to safety. The preceptor desires to keep the pupil under his control through practice and discipline of *Brahmacharya*.

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युपाघ्नत।

इन्द्रो ह ब्रह्मचर्येण देवेभ्यः स्व राभरत्॥[108]

i.e. Through the practice and discipline of *Brahmacharya* the wise men overcome the causes of early death. The soul, who is the master of limbs and organs, through restraints on hunting after senses brings light and happiness for the limbs of the body.

COW PROTECTION-

The cow occupies a special place in Hindu culture. She symbolises *dharma*, the Law of Righteousness. The reverence for the animal has been one of the central themes of Hinduism since ancient times. Going by ancient scriptures, the cow represents both the mother and the earth-the mother, because cow's milk is the first replacement for mother's milk, and the earth because the cow is a symbol of fertility. In times of distress, the earth is believed to take on the form of a cow to pray for divine aid.

Mahatma Gandhi has come up with mindblowing views regarding cows, some of which are mentioned below-

"Cow protection to me is one of the most wonderful phenomenon in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. Man through the cow is

[108] Ibid, 11/5/19

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enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives. Protection of cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God."[109]

"Hindus will be judged not by their tilaks, not by the correct chanting of mantras, not by their punctilious observance of caste rules, but by their ability to protect the cow." [110]

The references to the sanctity of the cow are endless. Her home is the firmament or heaven; [111] she is synonymous with *Uṣas* or Dawn in several hymns; similarly, she is often synonymous with the earth, plenty, clouds, speech, waters and light. Her greatness and importance are apparent in *Ṛgvedic* literature itself. There were strict punishments in ancient India for killing a cow. In fact, one of the causes for untouchability was the killing of a cow. Killing a cow was a heinous crime, at par with the killing of *Brāhmaṇa*. The killer head was shaved and he was fined ten cows and a bull.[112] *Yajurveda*[113] directs not to kill the cow which is the splendour of life and inviolable. The colossal and universal figure of cow has been sketched in the *Atharvaveda*.[114] Cow has been described as mother. She is mother of kings.[115] She has

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[109] Young India, 6-10-1921

[110] Godly Men and their Golden Words, p 182

[111] *Ṛgveda*, 3.55.1

[112] *Mahābhārata*, 3/240

[113] *Yajurveda*, 13.43

[114] *Atharvaveda*, 9.7.1-26

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been called *Bhaga* (glory, prosperity) and milk products mixed with *Soma* are considered to be the best edibles.[116] Regarding the importance of *Gorasa* or *Gavya* (milk and its by-products) it has been said that it strengthens the weaklings and makes the lifeless vigorous and lustrous. Cow is the grace of a household. Cow is glorified even in public gatherings.[117] It has been said that cow should not be slain as she symbolises good fortunes.[118]

PRAYER-

Prayer is nothing else but an intense longing of the heart. It is the very soul and essence of religion, and, therefore, prayer must be the very core of the life of man, for no man can live without religion. Prayer is the very core of man's life. Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleansing and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelop it. He, therefore, who hungers for the awakening of the divine in him must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of *Ramanama* is futile if it fails to stir the soul.

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[115] Ibid, 10.10.18

[116] Ibid, 4.21.5

[117] Ibid, 4.21.6

[118] Ibid, 7.73.8

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True prayer never goes unanswered. It does not mean that every little thing we ask for from God is readily given to us. It is only when we shed our selfishness with a conscious effort and approach God in true humility that our prayers find a response. The prayer is for God to make us better men and women. If the prayer came truly from the heart, God's grace would surely descend upon us. There is not a blade of grass which moves without His will, not one single true thought which does not leave a mark on character. It is good, therefore, to develop the daily habit of prayer.

Prayer is the greatest binding force, making for the solidarity and oneness of the human family. If a person realizes his unity with God through prayer, he will look upon everybody as himself. There will be no high, no low, no narrow provincialism or petty rivalries in the matter of language between an Andhra and a Tamilian, a Kanarese and a Malayalee. There will be no invidious distinction between a touchable and untouchable, a Hindu and a Musalman, a Parsi, a Christian or a Sikh. Similarly, there would be no scramble for personal gain or power between various groups or between different members within a group. The prayer is not exclusive. It is not restricted to one's own caste or community. It is all inclusive. It comprehends the whole of humanity. Its realization would thus mean the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Prayer brings a peace, a strength and a consolation that nothing else can give. But it must be offered from the heart. When it is not offered from the heart, it is like the beating of a drum, or just the vocal effect of the throat sounds. When it is offered from the heart, it has the power to melt mountains of misery. Those who want are welcome

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to try its power. The prayer for peace is accepted on all hands as a pure prayer, and in these times of severe strife and cruel bloodshed it is well that we offer prayers for peace.

By always praising the all-pervading Being, who is without beginning and without end, who is the supreme Lord for all the worlds, and who is the eternal controller of the universe, one gets beyond all grief-

अनादिनिधनं विष्णुं सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्।

लोकाध्यक्षं स्तुवन्नित्यं सर्वदुःखातिगो भवेत्॥

Mahatma Gandhi has emphasised the importance of prayer time and again. Here are some quotes-

"Prayer needs no speech. It is in itself independent of any sensuous effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with utmost humility".[119]

"It is better in prayer to have heart without words than words without a heart."[120]

"Prayer is the first and the last lesson in learning the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in various walks of life, culminating in the defence of one's nation's liberty and honour. Undoubtedly, prayer requires a living faith in God."[121]

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[119] An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, pp 51-52

[120] Young India, 23-1-1930, p 25

[121] Harijan, 14-4-1946, p 80

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"As food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul. A man may be able to do without food for a number of days-as MacSwiney did for over 70 days-but, believing in God, man cannot, should not live a moment without prayer."[122]

"I can give my own testimony and say that a heartfelt prayer is undoubtedly the most potent instrument that man possesses for overcoming cowardice and all other bad habits."[123]

"Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. Take care of the vital things and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of a square, and the angles will be automatically right."[124]

"God answers prayer in His own way, not ours. His ways are different from the ways of mortals. Hence they are inscrutable. Prayer presupposes faith. No prayer goes in vain. Prayer is like any other action. It bears fruit whether we see it or not, and the fruit of heart prayer is far more potent than action so called."[125]

The whole *Sanskrit* Literature is full of prayers wherein importance of the prayers has also been discussed. Here are some of the prayers-

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवा सस्तनूभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः॥

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[122] Young India, 15-12-1927, p 424

[123] Ibid, 20-12-1928, p 420

[124] Ibid, 23-1-1930, p 26

[125] Harijan, 29-6-1946, p 215

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i.e. Om, O Gods, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious. O ye adorable ones, may we see with our eyes what is auspicious. May we sing praises to ye and enjoy with strong limbs and body the life allotted to us by Gods.

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः। वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः

शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः सर्वैः शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः।

i.e. Om, May there be peace in heaven. May there be peace in the sky. May there be peace on earth. May there be peace in the water. May there be peace in the plants. May there be peace in the trees. May there be peace in Brahman. May there be peace in all. May that peace, real peace, be mine.

यो विश्वामि विपश्यति भवना सं च पश्यति।

स नः पूषाविता भुवत्॥[126]

i.e. The Lord who watches over the universe and fully understands the truth behind all things,-may He protect us all.

नमः शम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च।

नमः शङ्कराय च मयस्कराय च।

नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च॥[127]

i.e. We offer our salutations to thee, the giver of happiness and well-being. We offer our salutations to thee, the promoter of good and auspiciousness. We offer our salutations to Thee, the bestower of bliss and still greater bliss.

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[126] *Ṛgveda*, 3.62.9

[127] *Yajurveda*, 16.41

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मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे।

मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे॥[128]

i.e. May I be able to look upon all beings with the eye of a friend. May we look upon one another with the eye of a friend.

यस्मिन् सर्वे यतः सर्वे यः सर्वे सर्वतश्च यः।

यश्च सर्वमयो देवस्तस्मै सर्वात्मने नमः॥[129]

i.e. In Him all things exist; from Him they all originate. He has become all; He exists on every side. He is verily the All. Salutations to Him, who is the soul of everything.

CONCLUSION-

After going through his views on almost all spheres of life it is crystal clear that Mahatma Gandhi was immensely impressed by the invariable and inexhaustible Sanskrit Literature. He had achieved abundant inspiration for virtuous thinking and doing. It is due the noble teaching of Sanskrit Literature that Gandhiji translated his ideas into actions.

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[128] Ibid, 36.18

[129] *Mahābhārata-Śāntiparva*-74-83

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